

# ESSENTIAL PRACTICES

To value learning styles and to embrace children's rich diversity of predispositions, attitudes, habits, and cultural patterns the following strategies are helpful for all children from birth to school entry. These examples of strategies reflect learning opportunities and experiences to support children's individual needs:

## HEALTH AND SAFETY

- Ensure that children are provided with caregivers who interact in consistent and caring ways.
- Provide adult supervision and guidance for children's health and safety.
- Promote trust, security, and exploration through nurturing relationships and safe, consistent, and stimulating environments.
- Seek medical or developmental expertise if concerned about a child's learning and development.
- Gain access to comprehensive health care (Medical Home) including preventive medical and dental check-ups, mental health, immunizations, and care for acute and chronic health problems.
- Be aware of risk factors and signs of child abuse and neglect, and the responsibilities for reporting incidences.
- Have access to nutritious foods and feeding strategies that promote children's optimal health and development.

## INTERACTION AND ACTIVITIES

- Engage and play with children; supporting and encouraging their exploration.
- Provide multiple strategies to include the senses (sight, hearing, touch, smell, and taste).
- Engage children in open-ended activities for learning including play around dramatic themes, artistic creations, and sensory play. Encourage children to expand and elaborate their experiences.
- Use supportive verbal, visual, and physical cues in interactions and activities.
- Immerse children in language and print-rich environments.
- If the child needs extra support, simplify complicated tasks by breaking them into smaller parts or reducing the number of steps.
- Encourage child to play and form relationships with other children.

## CULTURAL CONTEXT

- Observe, recognize, and support children's unique ways of approaching new information and expressing themselves; taking into consideration their temperaments, inclinations, and attitudes.
- Provide a range of experiences to all children even though their responses may differ and some children may need adaptations.

- Strive for an environment that respects all people and is free of bias.
- Individualize experiences, activities, interactions, and instructions to meet the needs of each child.
- Take time to learn about children's everyday experiences at home and in their community. Incorporate traditional (or long-standing) effective strategies used by children's home cultures to support learning and development.
- Provide continued acknowledgements in ways that reflect children's cultural beliefs and traditions so that all children feel valued. Support a sense of competence.
- Incorporate teaching and learning strategies from children's cultural background (e.g., use culturally and linguistically appropriate song games, stories, changes, music, dance, and movement; and culturally specific knowledge in coordination with cognitive development.

### **PROBLEM-SOLVING SKILLS**

- Help children learn to accept, understand, and manage their emotions.
- Model and teach conflict resolution and problem-solving skills.

### **FAMILY SUPPORT**

- Build strong relationships with and among families, teachers, caregivers, and community programs.